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ABSTRACT

This report presents the results of a study that was undertaken to identify student attitudes toward the Pass-Fail (P-F) option at the University of Washington. A questionnaire designed to assess student opinions toward and possible behavioral changes resulting from P-F courses was sent to a random sample of sophomores, juniors and seniors enrolled in the Spring of 1969 who had originally entered the University before the Fall of 1968. Of 6,700 questionnaires distributed, 3,400 useable ones were returned. The major findings were: (1) the vast majority of students want the P-F option continued; (2) most students would have taken P-F courses for regular grades (P-G) had the P-F option not existed; (3) most P-F courses are taken for the relief they afford from grading pressure; (4) most students reported working less hard in P-F courses than in P-G courses; (5) roughly two-thirds of the students had not taken P-F courses in the Spring of 1969; and (6) roughly two-thirds of the students at the University will have taken P-F courses before graduation. (AF)

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UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

Office of Institutional Educational Research*

April 27, 1970

IER-132-2

PASS-FAIL EVALUATION: PHASE II: QUESTIONNAIRE ANALYSIS

I. *SUMMARY*

The data reported in this paper indicate:

(1) The vast majority of students want the P-F option continued.

(2) Most students would have taken P-F courses for R-G had the P-F option not existed.

(3) Most P-F courses are taken for the relief they afford from grading pressures.

(4) Most students reported working less hard in P-F courses than in R-G courses.

(5) Roughly two-thirds of the students had not taken P-F courses as of Spring, 1969.

(6) Roughly two-thirds of the students at the University will have taken P-F courses before graduation.

It is suggested that more effort be expended to determine why one-third of the students at the University have no intention of enrolling in a P-F course.

II. INTRODUCTION

In Fall, 1968, the University of Washington embarked on a two year experimental period to evaluate student performance in and attitudes towards pass-fail (P-F) courses. (See IER-132-1, 1970, for more details on the experiment.)

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As reported in IER-132-1 (1970), the Office of Institutional Educational Research launched into a two phase investigation to probe the results of the first year of the P-F experiment. The initial report dealt with the grades awarded to P-F enrollees before the Registrat's Office converted the grades into "pass" or "fail." Generally, it was found that the grades awarded to P-F students were significantly lower than grades awarded to students who were enrolled in courses for regular grades (R-G).

III. PHASE II: STUDENT OPINION

This study was undertaken to identify the attitudes of students toward the P-F option.

A. Procedure

A questionnaire (Appendix B) was designed by IER and reviewed by Dr. H. Bee, Dr. J. B. Gillingham, Dr. A. A. Lumsdaine, and Dean W. Phillips. (Note: Appendix A is contained in IER-132-1). The questionnaire was designed to assess student opinions towards and possible behavioral changes resulting from P-F courses.

The questionnaire was sent to a random sample of sophomores, juniors, and seniors enrolled in Spring, 1969, who had originally entered the University before Fall, 1968. Because of the criterion established for enrollment in P-F courses--45 credits earned at the U of W--all freshmen were automatically excluded (45 credits means sophomore standing). Transfer students regardless of class standing would also have had to complete the equivalent of one full year's work at the University.

Of the 6700 questionnaires distributed, 6200 were delivered. Of these 3400 useable questionnaires were returned. This represented a 58 per cent return and a 55 per cent useable return rate.

B. Results and Discussion

B. Results and Discussion

1. Demographic Data (Items 1-4)*

Tables 13-16 present the demographic characteristics of the respondents. With the exception of cumulative U of W GPA, the distributions of the variables in the sample were reflections of the distributions in the population from which the sample was drawn.

a. Sex (Item 1)

Table 13 presents the number of males and females in the sample.

TABLE 13

SEX

	N	%
Male	1947	57.1
Female	1458	42.8
Not answered	4	00.1
TOTAL	3409	100.0

b. Class Standing (Item 2)

The data arrayed in Table 14 present the class standings of the respondents.

TABLE 14

CLASS STANDING

Class	N	%
Soph.	796	23.4
Jr.	1038	30.5
Sr.	1478	43.4
Other	87	02.6
Not Answered	6	00.2

*The item number refers to the number of the questionnaire item.

c. Cumulative GPA (item 3)

Students were asked to report their cumulative U of W GPAs as a check on the criterion that P-F enrollees must have a 2.0 cumulative U of W GPA. These results indicated that roughly one-fourth of the students reported in Table 15 as having cumulative GPAs of less than 2.0 had enrolled in P-F courses (20 of 84).

TABLE 15

CUMULATIVE U OF W GPA'S AS OF BEGINNING OF SPRING, 1969

Cum. U of W GPA Category	N	%
[illegible]-2.00	84	02.5
2.00-2.24	430	12.7
2.25-2.49	619	18.2
2.50-2.74	629	18.5
2.75-2.99	652	19.2
3.00-3.24	466	13.7
3.25-3.49	281	08.3
3.50-3.74	176	05.2
3.75-4.00	60	01.8

On this measure, there were significant differences between the GPAs reported by students who returned questionnaires and those who did not. The major differences were in the lower U of W GPA categories. The reason for this is that students who had exercised the option tended to return the questionnaires at a higher rate than did those who did not. If students with lower GPAs abided by the 2.0 minimal GPA criterion, one would find relatively few P-F enrollees who fell within the lower U of W GPA categories. This, combined with a lower rate of return from students in the lower GPA categories who had not taken P-F courses, would result in a lower number of total respondents whose GPA's were less than 2.0. Since the proportion of less than 2.0 students is

is relatively small, there is little reason to believe that the significant differences in cumulative U of W GPA's would appreciably modify the results obtained by the questionnaire.

d. College (Item 4)

Table 16 presents the colleges in which the respondents were matriculated.

TABLE 16

COLLEGE

College	N	%
Arch & U.P.	109	3.2
A & S	1880	55.3
B.A.	325	9.6
Educ.	465	13.7
Eng.	345	10.2
Fish/For.	72	2.1
Nursing	112	3.3
Pharmacy	57	1.7
Other	33	1.0

2. Continuation of Pass-Fail

a. Continuation (Item 6)

Students were given a thumb-nail sketch of the present regulations governing P-F and were then asked their opinions (in structured form) about continuation of the option. All students in the sample were asked to respond to this item regardless of their personal experiences with the P-F option. Table 17 displays the choices of undergraduates about the P-F option.

TABLE 17

CONTINUATION OF PASS-FAIL OPTION

	N	%
Continued as is	1446	43.6
Continued, but more restrictive	98	03.0
Continued, but less restrictive	1689	50.9
Discontinued	82	02.5
Not answered	2	00.1

It is evident that the vast majority of students favored the continuation of the P-F option in some form. Only 2.5 per cent of the students favored abolishment and 3 per cent indicated that the use of the option should be more restrictive. Other analyses of the data on continuation indicate little difference in the opinions expressed by those who had taken courses by P-F and those who had not.

These results replicate studies at other institutions, e.g., Princeton (Karlins et al, 1969), Brandeis (Sgan, 1969), Dartmouth (Feldenesser, 1967), and Stanford (Rand, 1967). Nationally, as well as locally, then, students generally react quite favorably to the P-F option.

b. Content Analysis (Item 6)

The data presented in Table 18 summarize the results of a content analysis of the item requesting respondents to explain their choices among the various possible ways of continuing the P-F option.

While at first blush it may appear that there were a substantial number of comments which might be classified as "negative," a number of them were tied to "positive" comments, e.g., one student who said, "The system causes laziness. If you have a good grade going into the final, why bone-up? But, I think it's great. It lets me take courses I'd never have taken without it. You damn well better not ignore us IBM numbers and end it." This student's remarks were content analyzed and included in two categories--"laziness" and "variety of courses".

It is evident, then, that students reacted positively to the option although many would like to see the option extended to cover proficiency, distributional, and major areas. In addition, many asked that more P-F credits

be applicable toward a baccaulaureate degree.

TABLE 18

CONTENT ANALYSIS OF REASONS FOR CONTINUATION AND/OR MODIFICATION

	N	%*
Keep it as it is	414	15.1
Should not apply to courses in major	141	05.1
Causes laziness, lack of motivation	115	04.2
Must guard against advantage takers	88	03.2
Like grades, not just "P"	50	01.8
Enables variety of courses one wouldn't normally take - allows student individualism	715	26.0
More P-F (increase credits towards baccalaureate and/or credits per quarter)	328	11.9
No grade pressures	327	11.9
Allow frosh and/or transfers to take P-F courses	233	08.5
Eliminate <u>all</u> restrictions	193	07.0
Extend to proficiency and distribution requirements	133	04.8
Extend to language proficiency	128	04.7
P-F motivates learning for learning's sake	114	04.2
More time for R-G courses	97	03.5
Extend option to major area	86	03.1
Heavier course load possible	23	00.8
Allow probationary students to take P-F	17	00.6
Other	226	08.2
Grading system is faulty anyway	338	12.3
Other grading options, e.g., credit-no credit	107	03.9

These data also indicate that there are students who react negatively toward non-grades, i.e., there are students for whom grades are a necessity and/or for whom grades provide a motivating influence.

3. <u>Student Who Had Not Exercised Option</u>

Students who had not taken any P-F courses during the 1968-1969 academic year were asked to respond to three additional questions (Item 7-9) to determine the reasons they had not exercised their options. Data from this section indicate

~~*Per centages based on number of respondents.~~

*Per centages based on number of respondents.

that 54 per cent of the respondents had not taken courses by P-F. Data reported in IER-132-1 would indicate that this proportion should be higher. These figures, then, indicate that there was a tendency among non-P-F users not to respond

a. Reason for not taking P-F (Item 7)

The major reasons students gave for not having taken a P-F course are presented in Table 19. The five structured items were chosen on the basis of pilot studies (pre-tests) which had been conducted in three classes in ...ter, 19 Winter, 1969.

TABLE 19

NON P-F USERS: MAJOR REASONS FOR NOT CHOOSING A P-F COURSE

Responses	N	%*
All my courses were in my major.	707	38.7
I did not have enough credits to qualify.	61	03.3
I did not know about it.	185	10.1
I wanted or needed grades in all my courses to help my GPA.	604	33.1
I wanted to receive a grade to know how I did in each course.	311	17.0
Other	570	31.2

Roughly two of every five students indicate that they had not taken P-F courses because their course work consisted of major or required courses. [The enabling legislation (see Appendix A. IER-132-1) generally restricted the use of P-F to non-required courses.] This substantiates the resluts of the content analysis reported in Table 18 which showed 540 responses (20 per cent) dealing with extension of P-F to proficiency and/or distributional requirements, elimination of all restrictions, and extention to the major area.

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*Per centages based on number of respondents.

Approximately one-half of the students indicated that they wanted or needed a grade in the course. Many of the 311 students who reported that they wanted grades for feedback may be students who would not take P-F courses or credit-no credit courses because their motivations are fired by grades and without grades they might perform very poorly.

Among the 570 non-categorized responses were 75 dealing with insufficient GPA. These, then, are students who may have exercised the option had it not been for low grades.

Although one-third of the responses were classified as "other", there were no other consistancies in the category. Approximately 20 minor factors were identified and they were added into this category.

A small but not insignificant number (185) reported what they did not know about the option. The questionnaire may have performed a service function for many of them. One student, for example, penned his thanks for the P-F information contained on item 6 of the questionnaire. Beyond that, however, is the implication of inadequate communication between the University and its students. These students had either been told about P-F and forgotten about it or the information was inadequately transmitted to insure adequate reception.

[Editorial Comment: If the University decides to try the credit-no credit system, it is encumbent that the announcement be conveyed in sufficient detail to all students. This might be accomplished by notifying students at the time fee statements are sent to them.]

b. Plans for future P-F courses (Item 8)

The data arrayed in Table 20 indicate that approximately one-half of the students who had not taken P-F courses do not plan to do so in the future.

The characteristics of these students should be investigated further. What reasons do they have for not taking P-F courses? Are they unable to take P-F courses because of the limitations, e.g., all reamining course work in the student's major? Are they too embroiled in the grading system to be rewarded for good performance by the "personal knowledge that they had done well"? Are they leery that graduate and/or professional schools would look askance at records with many P-F marks? Miss Decky Fiedler (1970) has been involved with fellow students at Knox College in a survey of the reactions of deans of graduate schools toward an applicant whose transcript consisted of many P-F marks. Most of the deans of graduate schools reported a negative or neutral reaction and that much greater reliance would have to be placed upon recommendations and examination scores. For students faced with graduate or professional school who do not wish to rely on a one-shot test and/or recommendations, it would seem advisable for them not to take P-F courses.

There are, then, many reasons why a student does not intend to take P-F courses in the future. Some of the reasons are volitional. Other reasons which are beyond the student's own control may exist. The 46 per cent reported as not planning to take a P-F course, then, is maximal. Were those factors beyond a student"s personal control eliminated, a number of these students may well take P-F courses.

TABLE 20

THE NUMBER AND PER CENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHO ARE PLANNING TO TAKE P-F COURSES IN THE FUTURE

Responses	N	%
Will take	944	51.7
Will not take	837	45.8
Maybe or Undecided	46	2.5

c. P-F Advantages (Item 9)

Table 21 presents the results of a content analysis of the advantages students felt P-F would offer them.

TABLE 21

CONTENT ANALYSIS OF MAJOR P-F ADVANTAGES

Category	N	%
Relief from grade pressures	887	63.5
Take courses of interest	554	39.7
No need to worry about grades reflecting on own ability (concern over own efficiency in a particular subject)	422	30.2
Able to experiment with new course areas	246	17.6
More time for R-G courses, but can carry regular credit load	193	13.8
Can meet certain distribution requirements [Note: generally not permitted by enabling legislation]	143	10.2
Can take heavier course load	73	05.2
Can choose to take course R-G or P-F	49	03.5
Helps improve GPA	43	03.1

Most cited advantages were in reference to GPA. In one way or another nearly all of the respondents cited grades ("relief . . .", "no need to worry . . .", and "helps improve . . ."). In addition, the category, "more time for . . . load", is generically related to grades.

Students also make reference to the fact that P-F enables them to expand their educational horizons ("take courses of interest" and "able to experiment . . . areas"). In addition, there is some overlap between exploration and grades in the category, ("no need to worry . . . subject").

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*Per centages based on number of respondents.

d. P-F Disadvantages (Item 9)

As shown in Table 22, the major disadvantages cited by students who did not enroll in P-F courses, like the advantages, revolved around grades as a motivator and indicator. Only 34 responses did not deal with grades in one form or another. Again, then, grades do serve as positively motivating factors for some students just as grades are aversive to others. In view of these data, it would seem necessary for any state institution which adopts a non-grading system (e.g., credit-no credit) or a semi-non-grading system (e.g., P-F) to make participation in the system voluntary.

TABLE 22

CONTENT ANALYSIS OF MAJOR DISADVANTAGES

Category	N	%
No incentive because of grades	166	69.5
No progress report, i.e., no grades	47	19.7
Professors and institutions won't be able to discriminate between students	23	09.6
Doesn't apply to distribution requirements	18	07.5
Doesn't apply to courses in major	16	06.7

e. Summary

One of the major reasons given by students for not having taken a P-F course hinged on grades. Roughly one-half of the students indicated they wanted or needed a grade in a course. In addition, a number of students (39 per cent) indicated that all the courses they had taken were in their majors.

Roughly one-half of the respondents who had not taken a P-F course had no intention of taking one in the future. It could be informative to see why one-quarter of all respondents (837 of 3400) chose not to take P-F courses.

One can make the assumption that the non-opters who responded were representative of all non-opters. In this condition, the proportion of students who have no intention of taking P-F courses would be higher than the one in four indicated by the data. This proportion may well be in the neighborhood of one-third of the qualified student body. This, it would seem, makes it even more imperative that the University try to determine why so many students do not take advantage of the option.

Grades were mentioned frequently as both an advantage and a disadvantage. It is evident from these results and from the general social and psychological milieu that grades are positive and/or aversive stimuli to many in higher education. That is working or learning for grades is helpful to many students and dysfunctional to others.

4. P-F Enrollees (Item 10-13)

A final section of the questionnaire dealt with the attitudes and experiences of students who had taken P-F courses.

a. College from which P-F course taken (Item 10)

While students were asked to indicate the actual departments from which courses were taken, the computer program was not able to handle the number of variables required for such a detailed analysis. For that reason, the departments were collapsed into their parent colleges.

Table 23 presents the colleges from which students took P-F courses.

TABLE 23

COLLEGES FROM WHICH P-F COURSES TAKEN

College	N	%
Architecture	25	.01.1
Arts and Sciences	2197	91.5
Business Administration	125	05.2
Education	7	00.3
Engineering	22	00.9
Fisheries	1	00.0
Forestry	2	00.0
Pharmacy	1	00.0
Librarionship	3	00.1
Medicine	12	000.5
Secretarial Studies	6	00.2

It is evident that the vast majority of courses taken were in the College of Arts and Sciences. Arts and Sciences was over-represented because students in other colleges could not, by and large, take courses in their own colleges (c.f. restriction to non-required courses). When they used the option, students were almost forced to take P-F courses from a college which offered service courses--A & S.

b. Course Level (item 10)

Table 24 presents the level of the course students took for P-F. To the extent that students use P-F to explore other areas, there should be a concentration of course work at the 100 level since most introductory courses are at the 100 level.

TABLE 24

LEVEL OF P-F COURSES

Level	N	%
100	996	41.5
200	763	31.9
300	390	16.3
400	243	10.2

It is evident that the foregoing expectation was not confirmed. Although more students took 100 level courses than any other single level, more than one-

half of the courses taken were at the 200,300, and 400 levels.

c. Quarter in which Courses Taken (Item 10)

Students were asked to indicate the quarter in which they took P-F courses. With this item, one can determine not only the different quarters but also the quarter in which the first P-F course was taken. Table 25 presents these data.

TABLE 25

QUARTER IN WHICH COURSE TAKEN

Course no.	Fall		Winter		Spring		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	456	29.4	598	38.6	497	32.0	1551	100.0
2	23	03.6	255	39.5	368	57.0	646	100.1
3	6	03.4	12	06.9	156	89.7	174	100.0
4	1	08.3	-	-	11	91.7	12	100.0
Total	486	20.4	865	36.3	1032	43.3	2383	100.0

These data show an increasing use of P-F as the number of quarters since its inauguration increased. (See also Figure 1, IER-132-1). What is also significant is that more people took P-F courses for the first time Winter quarter than Fall quarter (598 vs. 456). Of those taking P-F courses Winter quarter, two-thirds were enrolled in their first P-F course. In contrast, the proportion of initial enrollees Spring quarter was roughly one-half.

It is also informative to look at the Fall quarter data. Seven of 486 students were enrolled in at least three P-F courses in Fall, 1968. While it is possible that these students took low credit courses and that it took three or four courses to total 5 credits, itiis also possible that with no one policing the credits P-F students were taking, some students took more than 5 credits in a given quarter. (One is reminded of the "little old sections lady" who prevented one student from registering for 15 credits of P-F one quarter.) It is anticipated that a fall-out of the studies suggested in

IER-132-1 will be the isolation of the number of students enrolled for more than 5 credits of P-F during a single quarter.

d. Function of P-F Course (Item 10)

Students were also asked to indicate the function the P-F course served. Table 26 presents the frequency distribution of the responses.

TABLE 26

FUNCTION SERVED BY P-F COURSE

Function	N	%
Satisfied dept. major requirement	431	18.2
Satisfied "special list" requirement	929	39.1
Satisfied both of above	13	00.5
Other and satisfied major req.	4	00.2
Other and satisfied sp. list req.	10	00.4
Other	987	41.6

These data indicate that roughly two-fifths of the P-F courses were taken for reasons other than to satisfy departmental major requirements and/or "special list" requirements. Put another way, most students who had taken P-F courses took them to satisfy requirements, i.e. they would have taken the courses regardless of the P-F option.

e. Would Course have been Taken by Regular Grades? (Item 10)

Students were, in fact, asked whether they would have taken the course had it not been possible to take them P-F. Table 27 presents the students' responses.

TABLE 27

WOULD COURSE BEEN TAKEN FOR REGULAR GRADE?

	N	%
Yes	1746	72.6
No	633	26.3
Don't know	25	01.0

The data presented in Table 27 substantiate the implications of the data exhibited in Table 26. Seventy-two per cent of the courses would have been

taken for regular grade had the P-F option not been in existence. This may be compared with nearly 60 per cent of the courses which were taken to satisfy departmental or special list requirements.

These results indicate, then, that although a number of students taking P-F courses are taking courses they would not normally take, the proportion is not as high as had been hoped when the program was approved.

f. Reasons for Response in "e" (Item 10)

Students were also asked to give the reasons why they would (or would not) have taken the course if it had not been possible to do so by P-F. Table 28 presents the results of the content analysis of the item.

TABLE 28

REASONS FOR TAKING (OR NOT TAKING) COURSE IF NO P-F OPTION

Reasons	N	%*	%**
Yes, even if no P-F	*1516*	*109.4*	*74.1*
Course was required	632	45.6	30.9
Course required plus student interested in it.	55	04.0	02.7
Course required and student felt he'd do well	7	00.5	00.3
Interested in the course	534	38.5	26.1
Not worried about the grade anyway	46	03.3	02.2
Needed the credit so would have taken	157	11.3	07.7
Other	85	06.1	04.2
No, not if no P-F	*530*	*38.2*	*25.9*
Fear low GPA	177	12.8	08.7
Couldn't do well	169	12.2	08.3
Too much effort to get good grade	68	04.9	03.3
Course load too heavy	52	03.8	02.5
Other	64	04.6	03.1

*Percentage based on number of respondents.
**Percentage based on number of responses.

Approximately three-quarters of the courses taken P-F would have been taken regardless of the P-F option. Over one-third gave as a sole, or related, reason the required nature of the course.

Similar results were reported at Stanford (Rand, 1967) and Dartmouth (Feldenesser, 1967). Both investigators found that three-quarters of the students who took courses by P-F would have taken those courses for R-G.

Fear that the course would have resulted in a low grade would have dissuaded students from taking 177 of the courses. In addition, if the 169 courses in which students felt they would not have done well were added, 346 of the courses would not have been taken because of a fear of not doing well. These two reasons, then, account for two-thirds of the courses that would not have been taken for R-G.

g. Other Comments (Item 10)

Table 29 presents the content analysis of the other reasons students gave for having taken courses by P-F.

TABLE 29

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Comment	N	%*	%**
Grade pressure	583	56.4	27.2
More time to devote to R-G classes	336	32.5	15.7
Able to take courses of personal interest	311	30.1	14.5
No worry about ability differences	292	28.3	13.6
Free to experiment with other areas	146	14.1	06.8
Could take heavier load	145	14.0	06.7
Could satisfy special list requirements	106	10.3	04.9
Try out P-F option	45	04.4	02.1
Take course from out-standing professor	37	93.6	01.7
Other	141	13.6	06.6

*Percentage based on number of respondents.
**Percentage based on number of responses.

The freedom from grade pressures was again mentioned by a substantial number of students (56 per cent) and in a substantial number of responses (27 per cent). In fact, a number of other categories have implications for grades. The advantage of being able to devote more time to R-G classes, for

example, contains the implication that a P-F course enables a student to obtain the same number of credits as under an R-G system while allowing him to devote more time to his R-G classes (he need earn only a "D" for a pass).

Freedom from worry about competing with other students with more ability in the discipline area also contains grade implications. Again, a student need perform only on an adequate level and need not concern himself with the "rate-busters," i. e., students whose performances on tests raise the grading curve.

These three areas, then, account for 56.5 per cent of the responses. The results substantiate data reported earlier in this paper. A substantial number of students use P-F to free themselves from worrying over grades. While there are students to whom grades are aversive, these data can not indicate whether the P-F enrollees do in fact view grades as aversive. The content analyses revealed few students who were opposed to the R-G system per se. In looking at the data, one gets the feeling that students are generally using P-F to raise their grades by effectively reducing their credit loads.

Rand (1967) reports similar results in a study at Stanford. She found that 82 per cent of the students who took P-F courses did so to avoid the competition for grades and the majority used P-F to devote more time to other courses. Karlins (1969) reports that students at Princeton tend to use P-F to reduce grade pressures and to increase study time in regular courses. There was no concrete evidence that great numbers of students used P-F because of interest in the discipline of the P-F course. At Dartmouth, Feldenesser (1967) reported that students used the P-F option to reduce their work load and/or to take care of their distributional requirements.

Sgan (1969), on the other hand, found at Brandeis that students used the

option in their first year to explore and experiment in diverse curricular areas and that evaluational anxieties were substantially reduced.

h. Effort in P-F Courses (Item 11)

The data arrayed in Table 30 indicate that roughly two students in five said they worked as hard in P-F courses as they did in R-G courses. It should be indicated that this is probably an over-estimate. Students were well aware that the questionnaire was designed to evaluate the P-F experiment and that indications of less work in P-F courses was liable to have deletorious effects. It is, therefore, likely that a number (not ascertained) indicated they worked as hard in P-F courses as in R-G courses when, in fact, they did not.

TABLE 30

EFFORT IN P-F COURSES

	N	%
Definitely didn't work as hard in P-F courses	294	24.5
Probably didn't work as hard in P-F courses	446	37.0
Worked just as hard in P-F courses	464	38.5

The results reported in Table 30 do conflict with the conclusions of a University of Michigan study which found that students worked just as hard in P-F courses as they did in R-G courses. The extent to which students expend equivalent or greater effort in P-F courses is dependent to a large extent upon the motive of the "opter." That is, it is likely that a student who enrolls in a P-F course for personal satisfaction will expend a great deal of time and energy in the course because of his interest. (In addition, there are students who are unable to reduce their efforts even if they would.) It is also likely that students who use P-F as an opportunity to fulfill the special list requirements or some departmental major requirements with no

real interest in the course will "slough off."

i. Study Habits (Item 12)

Students were asked whether there were any changes in their study habits in P-F courses as opposed to R-G courses. Table 31 presents the responses of students to this item. The italicized entries are the result of a content analysis of the ways P-F affected study habits and the percentages are based on the 586 "yes" responses.

TABLE 31

EFFECT OF P-F ON STUDY HABITS

Category	N	%
No effect	526	43.3
Not sure	103	08.5
Yes	586	48.2
Effects on reading	*174*	*29.7*
did required reading	*45*	*07.7*
more reading	*19*	*03.2*
less reading	*72*	*12.3*
varied reading by interest	*28*	*04.8*
no reading at all	*9*	*01.5*
Effects on note-taking	*115*	*19.6*
good note-taking (same as always)	*48*	*08.2*
less note-taking than usual	*39*	*06.7*
no note-taking	*10*	*01.7*
rely on Lecture Notes	*18*	*03.1*
Effects on attendance	*183*	*31.2*
went as often as for R-G	*89*	*15.2*
went less often	*94*	*16.0*
Less pressure	*250*	*42.7*
Time	*263*	*44.9*
more time studying	*20*	*03.4*
less time studying	*201*	*34.3*
no time studying	*15*	*02.6*
some time studying	*27*	*04.6*

The data indicate that slightly more students felt the P-F courses affected their study habits than did not. From a straight-laced academic view, one would have hoped that there would have been no negative effects on study habits

(there is a direct relationship between time spent studying and the amount of material learned). Positive academic factors might be (1) did the required reading, (2) did more reading, (3) good note-taking, (4) attended class as often as for R-G, (5) more time spent studying, and (6) same time studying. These 6 categories account for 248 responses out of 985 responses classified (25.2 per cent).

Negative academic effects might include all of the remaining categories with the exception of "less pressure." Those categories account for 487 of the responses classified (49.4 per cent). The "neutral" category, "less pressure," accounts for 42.7 per cent of the classified responses.

Rand (1967) and Feldenesser (1967) found similar results. Rand, for example, reported that 60 per cent of the P-F students reported that they did not work as hard in P-F courses.

j. Course Load (Item 13)

The data presented in the thirty-second and final table indicate that roughly one-third of the students took a heavier academic load as a result of P-F.

TABLE 32

EFFECT OF P-F ON COURSE LOAD

	N	%
Took a heavier load	389	31.9
Did not take a heavier load	816	66.9
Did both in different quarters	14	01.2

k. Summary (Item 10-13)

The P-F option was exercised by a sizeable group of students. These data indicate that a probable maximal per centage of "opters" was 46 per cent. It is likely that this proportion was lower since it is based solely on the proportion of respondents who indicated they had taken P-F courses. Students who had not exercised the option tended not to respond.

Generally, the motives students had for exercising the option were not as noble as had been hoped. That is, a majority of P-F enrollees took P-F courses for reasons other than to explore new disciplines and/or personal satisfaction.

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UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

PASS-FAIL QUESTIONNAIRE

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
Office of Institutional Educational Research

Spring Quarter 1969

Dear Student:

When the faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences approved the Pass-Fail Grading Option for two years, it asked the College's Ad Hoc Committee on the Bachelor's Degree to evaluate the option and to make recommendations to the faculty about its continuation.

To assist in the evaluation, a survey of undergraduate students is being conducted. The Committee will use the results of the survey as one of the pieces of information upon which to base its recommendations.

Although the study is being conducted for the College of Arts and Sciences, the Committee is asking students from all of the Colleges to complete this questionnaire regardless of whether or not they have taken a course by Pass-Fail. The questionnaire has been designed for speedy completion and will take only a few minutes of your time. Please carefully complete the questionnaire and return it promptly in the stamped self-addressed envelope provided.

The individual results of this survey will be kept entirely confidential. You will notice that at the bottom of this page you are asked to give your name. This is requested solely to facilitate any follow-up necessary to insure the high rate of return required for a valid study. Your name will immediately be torn off the questionnaire when it is received.

You may be assured that the study will be conducted in accordance with strict professional research ethics by the University's Office of Institutional Educational Research which has been asked to assist the Ad Hoc Committee on the Bachelor's Degree in evaluating the Pass-Fail Grading Option.

Thank you for your assistance.

J.B. Gillingham
Associate Professor and Chairman
College of Arts and Sciences'
Ad Hoc Committee on the Bachelor's Degree

- -

NAME (please print): _____
(Last) (First) (Initial)

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
Office of Institutional Educational Research

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT PASS-FAIL GRADING QUESTIONNAIRE
Spring Quarter 1969

1. Sex:

_____ Male _____ Female

2. Class Standing:

_____ Sophomore _____ Senior

_____ Junior _____ Other (please specify) _____

3. Cumulative U of W GPA:

_____ under 2.00 _____ 3.00-3.24

_____ 2.00-2.24 _____ 3.25-3.49

_____ 2.25-2.49 _____ 3.50-3.74

_____ 2.50-2.74 _____ 3.75-4.00

_____ 2.75-2.99

4. College:

_____ Arch. & Urban Planning _____ Fish. or Forestry

_____ Arts and Sciences _____ Nursing

_____ Business Administration _____ Pharmacy

_____ Education _____ Other (please specify) _____

_____ Engineering _____

5. Major(s): _____

6. The use of the pass-fail option is currently restricted to undergraduate students who have earned at least 45 credits at the University of Washington and who are not on academic probation. The student may elect as many as five credits a quarter on an optional pass-fail basis, and he may continue to elect courses on this basis until he has reached a total of 25 credits in the program that he submits for the baccalaureate degree. In your opinion, should the pass-fail option be:

_____ continued as is

_____ continued but MORE restrictive

_____ continued but LESS restrictive

_____ discontinued

Why? _____

_____

_____

IF YOU HAVE NOT TAKEN ANY COURSES BY PASS-FAIL, AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON, COMPLETE QUESTIONS 7, 8, and 9, AND RETURN THE QUESTIONNAIRE.

IF YOU HAVE TAKEN A COURSE BY PASS-FAIL, SKIP TO QUESTION 10.

7. If you have NOT taken a course by pass-fail, what are the main reasons you haven't done so? (check all applicable)

_____ All my courses were in my major

_____ I did not have enough credits to qualify

_____ I did not know about it

_____ I wanted or needed grades in all my courses to help my GPA

_____ I wanted to receive a grade to know how I did in each course

_____ Other (please specify) _____

_____

_____

8. At present, are you planning to take a course by pass-fail at some time in the future?

_____ Yes _____ No

9. What are the advantages and/or disadvantages to you, personally, to having a pass-fail grading option? _____

_____

_____

_____

10. What courses did you take by pass-fail and why?

	Department	Course Number	Course Title	Quarter Taken (check)	What function did this course serve in your total educational program (check)	Please make any additional comments you wish on why you took this course by pass-fail	Do you think you would have taken this course had it NOT been on pass-fail? (please check and explain)
Course 1				☐/F '68 ☐/W '69 ☐/S '69	☐/Satisfied departmental major requirements ☐/Satisfied "special list" requirements (A&S only) ☐/Other (please specify) _____ _____		☐/Yes Why or Why Not? ☐/No
Course 2				☐/F '68 ☐/W '69 ☐/S '69	☐/Satisfied departmental major requirements ☐/Satisfied "special list" requirements (A&S only) ☐/Other (please specify) _____ _____		☐/Yes Why or Why Not? ☐/No
Course 3				☐/F '68 ☐/W '69 ☐/S '69	☐/Satisfied departmental major requirements ☐/Satisfied "special list" requirements (A&S only) ☐/Other (please specify) _____ _____		☐/Yes Why or Why Not? ☐/No
Course 4				☐/F '68 ☐/W '69 ☐/S '69	☐/Satisfied departmental major requirements ☐/Satisfied "special list" requirements (A&S only) ☐/Other (please specify) _____ _____		☐/Yes Why or Why Not? ☐/No

11. In general, do you feel that you worked <u>less</u> hard in the course(s) you took by pass-fail than you would have had you been taking the course(s) for a letter grade?

_____ Definitely, did <u>not</u> work as hard in pass-fail course(s)

_____ Probably did not work as hard in pass-fail course(s)

_____ Worked just as hard (or harder) in pass-fail course(s)

Any comments? _____

12. In general, did your study habits (e.g., amount or intensity of reading, preparing for exams, class attendance, note taking, etc.,) change in your pass-fail courses?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Not Sure

If answered "yes," briefly describe how your study habits changed _____

_____

_____

13. Studies at some universities have indicated that some students take a pass-fail course without increasing their normal credit load, while other students use the pass-fail option as an opportunity to take more hours. As a result of the pass-fail option at the U of W, did you take a heavier credit load than you normally would have taken because you were able to take one or more courses by pass-fail?

_____ Yes, took a heavier load

_____ No, did <u>not</u> take a heavier load